

was full of accomplished works of art. Using an excellent architect, he built many fine buildings in his capital.

The empire lasted long after Suleyman but spent the next few hundred years in decline. None of the sultans were as accomplished as he had been, and the Ottoman Empire's power slipped.

2 Cultural Blending Case Study: The Safavid Empire

KEY IDEA Many world cultures incorporate influences from various peoples and traditions.

Throughout history, different peoples have lived together, and their cultures have influenced one another. Often these people have blended one culture with another. This can be due to trade, conquest, movement of people from one area to another, or conversion to a new religion.

Changes often happen in places where cultural blending takes place. Changes in language, arts and architecture or religion are examples. For example in the Safavid empire the spoken language was Persian. But after Muslims came to live in the empire, Arabic words appeared in the Persian language.

Cultural blending took place in the Safavid Empire of Persia. The Safavids began as members of an Islamic group that claimed to be related to the prophet Muhammad. In the 1400s, they became allied with the Shi'a, a branch of Islam. The major group of Muslims, the Sunnis, persecuted the Shi'a for their views. The Safavids, fearing their strong neighbors who were Sunni Muslims, decided to build a strong army to protect themselves.

In 1499, a 14-year-old leader named Isma'il led this army to conquer Iran. He took the traditional Persian title of shah, or king, and made the new empire a state of Shi'a. He destroyed Baghdad's Sunni population. Ottoman Turk rulers—who were Sunni Muslims—in turn killed all the Shi'a that they met. This conflict between the two groups of Muslims continues today.

The Safavids reached their height in the late 1500s under Shah Abbas. He reformed the military, making two armies that were loyal to him and him alone. He also gave new weapons to the army to make them better fighters. He reformed the government, getting rid of corrupt officials. He also brought gifted artists to his empire, who helped make his capital and other cities very beautiful. In

taking these steps, Shah Abbas drew on good ideas from other cultures. He used Chinese artists and enjoyed good relations with nations of Europe. Through this contact, the demand for Persian rugs increased greatly in Europe. In this period, rug-making, which had simply been a local craft in Persia, was changed into a major industry for the country.

As with the Ottoman Empire, the Safavid Empire began to decline soon after it had reached its greatest height. Shah Abbas had killed or injured his most talented sons—just as Suleiman had done—fearing that they would seize power from him. As a result, a weak and ineffective grandson became shah after him. Under his poor leadership, the empire lost power.

While the empire fell, the blended culture that the Safavid Empire had created continued. The main elements of that culture were the joining together of the Persian tradition of learning and sophistication and the devout faith of the Shi'a. These elements are found in Iran even today.

3 The Mughal Empire in India

KEY IDEA The Mughal Empire brought Turks, Persians, and Indians together in a vast empire.

Starting in the 600s, India went through a long period of unsettled life and trouble. After the Gupta Empire fell, nomads from central Asia invaded the area and created many small kingdoms. In the 700s, Muslims arrived on the scene. Their arrival launched a long history of fighting between them and the Hindus who had lived in India for centuries.

The Hindus were able to prevent the Muslims from taking their land for about 300 years. Then a group of Muslim Turks conquered a region around the city of Delhi and set up a new empire there. They treated the Hindus in their area harshly. Their rule ended in 1398, when Timur the Lame totally destroyed Delhi.

A little over a hundred years later, a new power arose. Babur had a small kingdom north of India. He raised an army and began to win large parts of India. Babur had many talents. He was a lover of poetry and gardens and a sensitive man who used his feelings for others to become a superb leader. He was also an excellent general. He once led a force of only 12,000 soldiers to victory over an enemy army of 100,000. His empire was called the Mughal